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ABSTRACT

The Web site library is a new type of digital library incorporating both digital collections and digital service. In the parliamentary context, this new application of information and communications technology has a dual function: to provide a virtual collection to satisfy users' information demands and to provide all the current services needed by clients of a parliamentary library in modern society. In this paper, the application of information technology in the library, the role of media in the library, and its digital collection development are surveyed by decades from 1960 to 2010. Then the five domains or zones of Internet-based content in the Web site library of the Parliament Library of the Legislative Yuan of the Republic (Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China) are described (i.e., the browsing, searching, dissemination, reference, and leisure zones), and an overview of this Web site library's services is given. (Author/MES)

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The Website Library and its Parliamentary Information & Dissemination Services: a Case Study of the Parliamentary Library of Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

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Abstract:

The website library is a new type of digital library incorporating both digital collections and digital service. In the parliamentary context this new application of information and communications technology has a dual function: to provide a virtual collection to satisfy users' information demands, and to provide all the current services needed by clients of a parliamentary library in modern society. In the present paper, the application of information technology in the library, the role of media in the library, and its digital collection development are surveyed by decades from 1960 to 2010. Then the five categories of Internet-based content in the website library of the Parliamentary Library of the Legislative Yuan are described, and an overview of this website library's services is given.

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1. Introduction

A website library is by nature a vehicle of digital library service. Indeed, a simple definition of a website library would be that it is a digital library that provides not only electronic collection access but also electronic client services via the Internet.

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The website library of the Legislative Yuan of the Republic of China (Taiwan) originated from the development of an Internet site for the Parliamentary Library. However, the creation of a website library not only includes building up the library's Internet presence, but also combining the concepts and practice of website design with the full range of activities of the library. In this way the scope of library service can be expanded in cyberspace, to attract many more clients and provide diversified access and assistance beyond the limits of what can be accomplished in a real library space.

In designing our website library the staff of the Parliamentary Library of the Legislative Yuan decided to create four modules for the provision of library service via the Internet. These were a reference question and answer service (QA), a selective dissemination of information service (SDI), a multimedia information storage and retrieval service (ISAR), and a general Internet access through the library's portal. The objective was to create a virtual library service network able to meet the massive information demands of legislators.

The website library is not a sudden invention. It has developed naturally with the growing role and influence of information technology in libraries. Table 1 illustrates the trend by decades from 1960 to 2000, with some forecasts of developments to 2010.

Decade	**1960-1970 Decade of Communication Technology**	**1970-1980 Decade of Computer Applications**	**1980-1990 Decade of Information Applications**	**1990-2000 Decade of the Internet**	**2000-2010 Websites & Second-Stage Internet**
Information Technology	(1) Professional Librarians (2) Professional Counseling & Information Service	Library Automation Systems	All Kinds of Databases for Resource Development & Utilization	(1) Electronic Publishing (2) Electronic Collections (3)Hypermedia	(1) Website Library (2) Personal Digital Library

Table 1: Information Technology Applications in the Library Profession 1960-2010

2. *The Contents of the Website Library*

Digital media have grown rapidly since the digital revolution started in the early 1990's. Due to the benefits of digital transmission of information, a rapid conversion has occurred from the analog formats of paper-based, audiovisual or microform media to digital formats which are machine readable and compatible with automated data processing.

The digital revolution has influenced libraries to varying degrees. One phase has been the development of a digital library collection from electronic resources, parallel to the main collection; but another stage could see the digital collection becoming the core of the library. Table 2 summarizes the main information storage media in libraries in order of importance in the five decades from 1960 to 2010.

1960-1970	**1970-1980**	**1980-1990**	**1990-2000**	**2000-2010**
(1) Paper	(1) Paper	(1) Paper	(1) Paper	(1) Digital Media
(2) Microforms	(2) Microforms	(2) Magnetic Tape	(2) Digital	(2) Paper
(3) Audiovisual	(3) Audiovisual	(3) Microforms	Media	
	(4) Magnetic Tape	(4) Audiovisual	(3) Other	

Table 2: Principal Media in Library Collections, 1960-2010

The Parliamentary Library of the Legislative Yuan established the first stage of its website digital library in 1999. This was mostly based upon the Chinese online databases which the library itself had developed in the 1980's and 1990's, and upon the corresponding patterns of legislative reference service which the library had evolved since 1980.

The website library contents can be divided into five domains or zones, each with its own type of service suited to the different character of the information it supplies. These distinct domains of service and content could be called the browsing zone, the searching zone, the dissemination zone, the reference zone and the leisure zone. Their characteristics are presented in Table 3. In this table we have analysed the nature of the information stores and data linkages within our website library under six separate characteristics: (1) the type of resources available; (2) the function served; (3) the type or degree of interaction via the user interface; (4) the scope of the intended audience;
(5) whether or not service requires subscription; (6) the availability of participation by a postings capability for network users.

Domain <<<<<<<< ***Characteristic***	**Browsing Zone**	**Searching Zone**	**Dissemination Zone**	**Reference Zone**	**Leisure Zone**
Resources	Static Materials	Cumulative Materials	Current Materials	Indicative Materials	Materials for Pleasure
Function	Browsing	Searching	On-demand	Guide	Browsing
Interactivity	Low	High	Both Interactive & Automatic	Crossing through only	Yes
Audience	Entire Network	Partial Net / IP	IP Address only	Entire Network	Entire Network
Subscription	No	Partial	Yes	No	Sometimes
Participation By Postings	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

Table 3: Content Domains and their Characteristics in the Website Library

The advantages of building a website library according to fixed content domains are: (1) more efficient electronic access for library clients, and (2) being able to offer user support services, value-added services and reference services via diverse e-collections.

3. The Browsing Zone

It is important that a website library contain both the library catalog and a help feature giving orientation, instruction and starting points for users. In addition, our browsing zone includes: (1) official documents and bulletins of the Legislative Yuan, such as the *Record of Interpellations* (questions to ministers) , *Legislative Resources* (summaries of meetings), or *Sources of Law* (new enactments passed); (2) information packages compiled by professional librarians, such as our *Hot Topics* for current events; (3) bibliographic information on new acquisitions, such as our *Periodical Contents* bulletin and our new book bulletin.

4. The Searching Zone

Database access is one of the basic functions of the website library. The technology can be traced back to the 1970's or even earlier. Its evolution is shown in Table 4.

Period	E-name	Form of Contents	Medium
Pre-1970	Electronic Files	Electronic Documents/ Electronic Records	Single Medium
1970-1980	Stage 1 Databases	Bibliographic/Indicative/Numeric Searchable Arrays	Single Medium
1980-1990	Stage 2 Databases	Bibliographic/Indicative/Numeric/ Full-text Searchable Arrays and Image Bases	Multi-media
1990-2000	Digital Library	Address-Linked Libraries/ Museums/Galleries/ Archives/Catalogs	Hyper-media
2000-2010	Knowledge Databases	Intelligent Expert Systems/ Knowledge Systems/ Learning Systems	Single Medium or Multi-media or Combined Media

Table 4: The Development of Digital Database Collections, 1960-2010

Digital library collections must strive for comprehensiveness in their database access. The number of searchable items provided by its databases and the number of subject fields covered in its databases are two important measures of the level of collection development of a website library.

The searching zone of our website library at the Legislative Yuan has three components. The first component consists of the Chinese databases of the Legislative Yuan's activities developed by the library since 1985, such as our Laws database, Interpellations database, Proceedings database, Periodicals database, News database, and Library system. Most of these database systems have been transformed into web-based versions in recent years. More recently five new databases have been added to this category: the Legislative Yuan's Law Amendments database, the Bill Tracking database, the Legislative News Summaries database, the Legislators' Speeches database and the Parliamentary Forums. The second component of our searching zone comprises Chinese commercial databases; while the third includes non-Chinese commercial databases (mainly in English), such as Grolier Online, Lexis.com, EBSCO Host, and DIALOG SELECT.

The parliamentary materials of our searching zone, in the Chinese databases which we ourselves have developed, are in the public domain and free access to them is possible. In the case of all the other, commercial databases in our searching zone we have to deal with copyright when downloading and printing. Obviously, access to the IP address for database searching is a management issue in terms of intellectual property rights.

5. The Dissemination Zone

The global acceptance and continuing development of the Internet are mainly attributable to its success as a means for the dissemination of information. The public demand for Internet access empowers the website library of the Legislative Yuan as a vehicle of public information in the information society, more popular even than the traditional public library.

Reporting useful news and information via the web to library clients is a necessity in the everyday activities of our Parliament. So, planning and constructing a network area to deliver a current awareness and instant information service according to user needs, and especially a service that reports news relevant to them, was essential in building our website library. The information packages (or knowledge packages, or subject knowledge sets) delivered in our website library are products of the Parliamentary Library for its public. Our core knowledge service is a user-oriented, profile-based, preliminary knowledge management system. The website library is important as a provider of information portfolios and value-added knowledge services to the general public to help them navigate in our modern society.

6. The Reference Zone

To promote professional expertise in library service, a website library should at least offer the following four electronic reference tools, which together form a complete web resources check-list: (1) a website catalogue by classification or by subject; (2) an index of all web pages in the website; (3) a website analysis and usage evaluation, and (4) a detailed website contents guide.

The website catalog service of the Parliamentary Library, originally called the website inventory, was drafted on the basis of the proposal for a Global Information Infrastructure made at the G-7 economic summit conference in 1995. As to the indexing of web pages, it has to include both a general index and an in-depth index. Our general web-page index is similar to a periodical contents list; our in-depth index combines features of a contents index and a full-record text index.

Website analysis and usage evaluation are significant both for website promotion and for resource management. They are identical to the user analysis done in the traditional research library and information center. The website contents guide is another useful and objective web reference tool. It contains technical data on the website, web administrator, web owners, web communication protocol, information technology service provider and maintenance arrangements, website costs, activity reports and value of information provided.

7. The Leisure Zone

The chief purpose of the website library is to be a communication center in cyberspace. From this new perspective, we can see that a website library contributes news, information, education and entertainment to web users, or Internauts, everywhere.

The website library can provide a multiplex digital space for all kinds of activities related to people's life and work, to arts, literature and entertainment. *Refreshment on the Web* is a general Internet reading room in our website library at the Legislative Yuan. It contains eight small areas devoted to the arts, film, humour, literature, travel, music, daily life, and comics. It is a cyberspace zone for leisure activity from which readers can explore the wonders of the virtual world.

8. Services from the Parliamentary Website Library

I. A Chinese E-paper for Library Clients

Our current information delivery service is a daily electronic newspaper published by the Parliamentary Library and distributed to the public as well as library clients. Beginning on July 1, 2000, it had published two hundred issues by April 11, 2001. Items in our e-paper include: (1)

daily legislative news; (2) the latest laws; (3) legislative summaries; (4) a record of general policy questions (interpellations) to the government in the Legislative Yuan; (5) a Parliamentary forum; (6) committee reports; and (7) a report from our international legislative awareness service.

II. Multilingual Legislative Awareness

Our multilingual, international legislative awareness service, or *Dispatch of Current Legislative Information,* is a daily report service providing major international news and updates on the status of legislation around the world. Translated from reliable sources in eleven countries, this report provides a Chinese edition of news and other materials which originally appeared in the Chinese, English, Japanese, German, Spanish and Russian languages. It is one of our most rewarding and popular services.

III. Library E-mail Distribution Service for Press Clippings

News and commentary about Parliamentary legislators from sixteen local Chinese or English newspapers will be selected and filed electronically each day through an extension of the Legislative Yuan News System. These electronic press clippings on parliamentarians are automatically e-mailed to each legislator's individual e-mail box at 10:00 p.m. daily.

IV. Information and Knowledge on Demand

The new, second phase of our library automation project (or LA II) at the Parliamentary Library of the Legislative Yuan features an on-demand Internet information dissemination service on topics chosen by our clients. Users may easily select topics of interest and construct a research profile from our subject thesaurus. Then the LA II system will compile all of the current website resources related to the chosen subjects and e-mail site references to users promptly. This subject access to websites is an individual subscription feature of our website library.

V. Subject-oriented Information Packages

The subject-oriented information package service of our website library draws on a well-organized and comprehensive online collection of web resources arranged by subject headings. The service collates and stores links to previously prepared research materials under an online menu, and thus makes them available for use by everyone, whether as a direct reference or as background for further research.

9. Conclusion

The website library is an information technology application less than three years old, but it is already showing itself to be a very important component of the hybrid library of the future that will seamlessly combine real-space and cyberspace collections. Thus the website library is the shape of things to come for the research libraries' community, of which the parliamentary libraries are a family member.

We, as parliamentary librarians, have a responsibility to welcome and shape our electronic future, keeping pace with the evolving electronic world of information. The website library of the Legislative Yuan is a pilot project for our new role in the dynamic knowledge economy, as managers of parliamentary knowledge.

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